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ABSTRACT

Social studies is a unique subject because it has the potential to bring about significant social change. Social studies educators can serve as change agents because they are in a position to design the nature of the social studies taught in the schools. A case study of the historical context through which social studies evolved in the United States illustrates this thesis. Over the past 70 years, U.S. social studies educators have evolved an American notion of social studies as distinct from the separate subjects of history and geography. That unique notion is based primarily upon the characteristics of the society that educators experienced in the early 1900's, summed up in the perception that the quality of urban life was condemning generations of American citizens to lives that were not consistent with the American dream. Educators believed that public schools should be places where future citizens would learn to improve the quality of their lives. Social studies educators identified four citizenship skills which are currently encapsulated in the National Council for the Social Studies guidelines: acquiring knowledge about the human condition; processing information; valuing; and knowing how to participate. Thus, if U.S. society changes in its character or modifies its structure, social studies educators must interpret those changes and modify the curriculum accordingly.
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SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER EDUCATION AS LEADERSHIP TRAINING

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1984

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Education is change.

Education is power.

Educational leadership is power to change.

I wish to press the thesis in this paper that social studies education is leadership training, and a correlative thought that social studies educators who train teachers are more effective as leaders when they identify and define the meaning of social studies for their nation or region. One might argue that all educational institutions, teachers, and curriculum--the entire educational enterprise--has the potential to exercise power for political, social, and economic change. In fact, social studies teachers in many countries throughout the world are viewed as having the potential to be significant change agents in their nations.

Teacher education programmes in social studies reflect. . . goals of social studies, but also the development needs of particular societies, nations, and regions. More than most other subject areas social studies is shaped by and in turn shapes the social, economic, and political development of a nation or region.¹

It is entirely proper that social studies should be conceived as part of a nation's process of development. Some of the reasons why social studies should be conceived as the developmental process of a nation is (a) the notion of social studies as a school subject is not fixed and that differing interpretations of the meaning of social studies is part of a nation's growth and development; (b) social studies content is affected by the developing social, political, and economic institutions within the society; and (c) nations adopt social studies for different citizenship training reasons.

The social studies field, because of its developmental nature, should be identified in each nation as part of a system for leadership training. That training, as we have already suggested, includes preparation of social studies teachers as change agents. To illustrate the point, the Nigerian government announced in its 1977 National Policy on Education that "The federal government of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument, par excellence, for effective national development."² In short, Nigeria, in its National Policy on Education, linked national progress to the process of developing education, and as part of

the developmental process, the National Policy identified the following social studies objectives:

- a. to create an awareness and understanding of the evolving social and political environment. . .
- b. develop a capacity to earn and acquire skills. . .of observation, analysis, and inference which are essential to the forming of sound judgment.
- c. to insure. . .personal development [and] positive personal contribution to the betterment of mankind.
- d. . . .to develop systematic appreciation of the diversity and inter-dependence of all members of the local community, and the wider national and international community.³

One other example of the role of social studies as leadership training is illustrated by Chief C.A. Adewole, late executive secretary of the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP), who wrote: "In Africa today, education has become a basic foundation on which the continent has to rely for effective development. . ."⁴ In discussing the role of ASSP he "stressed the relevance of reform in education and noted that reform [should] reflect changes in the developmental process."⁵

It does seem true that no other school subject is so defined that a nation's experience becomes the very nature (definition and meaning) of the curriculum. And as suggested above, the important leadership that social studies educators can exert may be in proportion to their accurate vision of their countries' application of social studies to citizenship education. In sum, the nature of the social studies as interpreted by educators can be a powerful force for initiating change.

Educators can help a nation that has adopted social studies chose between competing interpretations of the nature of social studies. Some educators still view social studies as a collection of self-contained subjects such as history, economics, or government, while others view the field as a composite or melding of the content from various subjects into an integrated citizenship curriculum. Social studies has citizenship education as a goal for some educators, but not for others. Some educators wish students to gain knowledge or information and learn how to examine and evaluate that information in order to identify problems and make decisions on social/personal needs, while others would tell students what their needs ought to be. Teaching can range from a reflective inquiry/decision-making process method based on students' perceived needs and interests to a traditional, didactic approach offering selected facts that are intended to indoctrinate. In short, how students

are taught their citizenship depends, in part, on a nation's concept of social studies

Social studies as a field has tended to confuse many because of the diverse nature, alternative definitions, and competing teaching methods which are suggested as appropriate for instruction. We conclude this part of the paper by insisting that an important task of the social studies educator is to help the nation choose from among the competing, diverse natures of the social studies. The remainder of this paper will briefly review social studies as it has uniquely evolved in the American school system, and reflect on the choices that American social studies educators have made about the nature of social studies.

United States: A Social Studies Case Study

Clearly American educators have approached the defining of the nature of the nature of the social studies as applied in the United States by postulating three alternative traditions: (a) teaching social studies as Citizenship Transmission, (b) teaching social studies as Social Science, and (c) teaching social studies as Reflective Inquiry. Though these may not be the only teaching traditions that define the nature of social studies, they are the three most clearly documented by custom and usage in the American school system.⁶ A brief review of the historical context through which social studies evolved, coupled with its announced goals and purposes, will illustrate the efforts of educators in one country to identify how social studies should be defined to meet the purposes of that country's citizenship training.

Why Social Studies?⁷

The field of social studies was dimly perceived at the end of the 19th Century. Building on early foundations, social studies was conceived as a curriculum for the schools in the early 20th Century. Clearly, an examination of the texts used in the one-room schoolhouses at the turn of the century would show that responsibility for citizenship training was borne by the entire school curriculum. After the turn of the century, and the adoption of social studies as an essential field of study, the mission of citizenship education became the goal. Other subject areas gravitated to purposes other than citizenship, leaving social studies curriculum with the primary responsibility for the training of future citizens.

Why the change in American schools from the separate subjects of history and geography to an integrated social studies curriculum? That change occurred, in part, because some of the educators at the turn of the century identified what they thought to be a crisis. By 1900 America had become an industrialized, interdependent, urban society. That society was in crisis, for the quality of urban life, including the conditions of the factories, was condemning generations of American citizens to lives that were not consistent with the American Dream. Educators believed that public schools should be places where future citizens would learn to improve the quality of their lives. The social studies curriculum in those schools was intended to provide an organized, integrative citizenship education aimed at training decision-makers who could use a democratic foundations to earn their dream of the good life.

In summary, the change from traditional subject areas to a social studies school curriculum occurred because some educators believed that public school education should offer practice in democracy, including decision-making. Citizens could not participate in the control of their own lives unless they had training in the skills of reasoning, valuing, and participating. Traditional separate subject matter of history and geography and traditional didactic teaching as practiced at the turn of the century could not offer a proper training for contemporary citizenship. To illustrate this point, history courses offered in the secondary schools at the turn of the century concentrated on early and medieval western European history. Discussions of modern or contemporary problems that actually faced citizens in 1900 were not part of the curriculum. Geography was conceived as land forms and exports, and government was taught as structure and function without reference to the actual practices of the political system. Social studies was to be "something different"—it was to be designed to appeal to the needs and interests of those youth who were not normally served by the secondary schools of the 1800's. That is, social studies was to become general citizenship education for all students.

What Is Social Studies?

Because social studies was conceived and applied some seventy years ago, it does not follow that all schools or teachers have necessarily adopted the notion of a social studies curriculum. It was probably true that social studies was conceived as a citizenship training curriculum for those who attended the public schools. Some have even claimed that social studies is general education for the poor, immigrant, and the lower-middle class who need an organized introduction to the traditions, the geography, the values, and the problems and processes of the "American way." Others

have argued that social studies ought to be a curriculum of general education designed to promote the development of citizens who think for themselves and who are decision-makers, for it is those citizens who must know how to practice democracy. It should be no surprise that different interpretations of the goal of social studies has arisen over the years, for there are those who believe that "the right values and right answers" should be indoctrinated. Alternatively, other educators believe that the goal of social studies should be citizenship based on a process of decision-making. To this day, authorities within the field debate the meaning of social studies, and though there has emerged some agreement, the field is still evolving in the United States following the three traditional ways of teaching social studies: Citizenship Transmission (CT), Social Science (SS), and Reflective Inquiry (RI).

The definition of social studies according to some social studies educators is:

Social Studies is the integration of social science and humanities for the purpose of instruction in citizenship education.⁸

One part of the definition is particularly significant, for the definition tells us that the reason or goal for teaching social studies is instruction in citizenship education.

The Goal of Social Studies

Simply put, the goal of teaching social studies is citizenship. If the goal is citizenship, then what must a teacher do to achieve that goal? This is a point on which some social studies educators have agreed.

The Four Objectives for Teaching Social Studies to Achieve the Goal of Citizenship

The National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Guidelines 1971, revised 1979, suggest that to achieve the goal of citizenship the teacher should teach social studies to achieve the following four objectives:

1. Gain knowledge about the human condition which includes past, present and future perspectives.
2. Acquire skills necessary to process information.
3. Develop the skills to examine values and beliefs
4. Encourage the application of knowledge through active participation in society.

Just what does this mean? It means that a teacher will plan to practice all four objectives when teaching social studies, whether in kindergarten or twelfth grade. In short, teachers should help students gain knowledge, process information, develop the skill to examine values, and finally, apply knowledge through active civic participation. The argument is that if students practice the four objectives throughout a K-12 curriculum, then that social studies curriculum is aimed at the goal of citizenship education.

The Meaning of Citizenship

The four objectives define the meaning of citizenship in a social studies program. Given the conflicting meanings of citizenship in pluralistic American society, no one definition has captured the allegiance of all citizens. In such a pluralistic society, the social studies program, rather than offering a definitive definition of citizenship, offers the four objectives. One might conclude that the good citizen practices the four objectives and perfects these skill objectives in a school social studies program, leading to citizens capable of defining the meaning of citizenship for themselves.

In summary, social studies educators in the United States have evolved over that past 70 years an American notion of social studies. That unique notion was based primarily upon the characteristics of the society they were experiencing. Those characteristics included an interdependent, industrialized, urban, pluralistic and democratic society whose citizens were expected to identify problems and be decision-makers. Given the characteristics of American society, educators came to view the goal of social studies as citizenship education, because they believed that the role of citizen is not innate, but learned, and therefore, learning about the role should not be left to an osmosis-like chance encounter with the citizenship practices of the general society. Rather the citizenship role in a complex society requires special attention in a school social studies curriculum. The decision-making process in a democratic society is essential, because the quality of decisions made has a direct effect on the quality of life and for this reason some educators would base the social studies curriculum on problem-solving. Social studies educators in defining the role of a citizen identified four skills which are now encapsulated in the NCSS Curriculum Guidelines: gaining knowledge, processing, valuing, and knowing how to participate. Finally, educators believe that a developmental social

study program that focuses on democratic decision-making at each grade level, K-12, should offer opportunity for each student to practice in a school setting the role of citizen. In short, since the turn of the century, American social studies educators have been involved in the process of identifying and defining the meaning of social studies as it ought to be applied in the nation's schools.

Conclusion

The title of this paper/presentation, "Social Studies Teacher Education as Leadership Training," suggests how many political as well as educational leaders may think about social studies. Social studies is a unique subject, because it has the potential to effect significant social change. Therefore, leadership as social change is very much a part of social studies teacher education. Also, tied to the concept of leadership is the thought that social studies educators are more effective as leaders when they identify and define the meaning of social studies for their nation or region. "United States: A Social Studies Case Study" illustrates this thought by tracing the historical context in which American social studies as a school subject was created and evolved by social studies educators. The lesson remains—there is no one social studies curriculum, but rather a subject area that is responsive to the needs of the country or region. If a society in which social studies has been adopted changes its character or modifies its structure, social studies educators ought to play the role of interpreting those changes and modify the curriculum. It is for this reason we believe social studies, as distinct from most other subject fields, mirrors the society for which it was created. And finally, it is for this reason that one country's interpretation of the nature of social studies cannot be transferred in whole to another country.

Jane Cottingham:

[Social studies] education which aims at encouraging an awareness in children of the social and political problems of our time and at forming responsible men and women capable of taking action, presupposes a school which is itself a place for exchange, dialogue and experimentation; in short, a school open to life.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Jan Tucker, "Teacher Education in Social Studies," Chapter 11, UNESCO Handbook for the Teaching of Social Studies, ed. Howard Mehlinger (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1981), 298.
- ²Ibid., 304. Also for an excellent treatment of social studies development in Nigeria see Merry Merryfield, "Social Studies: A Tool for National Development in the New Nations" (unpublished paper, 1983).
- ³Tucker, loc. cit.
- ⁴Chief C.A. Adewole, "ASSP 1982/85 Project Plan—Summary" (unpublished paper, 1982). The context in which Chief Adewole's remarks are cited here can be found in the last article he wrote before his untimely death: "African Social Studies Program," The Social Studies Teacher, 4, 3 (Feb/Mar., 1983), 1, 10.
- ⁵Ibid.
- ⁶For a concise treatment of the history and philosophical development of the social studies movement in the United States see: Robert D. Barr, James L. Barth and Samuel Shermis, The Nature of the Social Studies (Palm Springs, CA: ETC Publications, 1978), and Robert D. Barr, James L. Barth and S. Samuel Shermis, Defining the Social Studies, Bulletin 51 (Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1977).
- ⁷The substance of the remainder of this paper was, in part, published under James L. Barth, "What and Why Is Social Studies," The Social Studies Teacher, 5, 2 (Nov. Jan., 83/84) 3, 10.
- ⁸Barr, Barth, and Shermis, The Nature of the Social Studies, 18.

Jane Cottingham

. . . education can either function as an instrument of oppression or become an instrument for liberation. If it is the latter, it helps people to deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.